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Contact: Micah Swafford
202-225-2132

Congress Votes to Downsize Government by 1%

WASHINGTON, D. C. – Today, the U.S. House voted to balance the budget without using the Social Security surplus for the first time in forty years reducing most federal agencies by approximately 1%. Congressman Ernest Istook (R-OK) managed the legislation on the floor as it passed, 218 to 211.

The 1% reduction is in discretionary government programs, meaning it will not reduce Social Security benefits, veterans' benefits, or Medicare and federal workers will not have their pay cut, Istook says. Instead, federal bureaucracies will be required to eliminate waste and abuse in their own programs.

The only salaries cut by the bill are for members of Congress.

"This is the showdown between those who always want to spend more, and those of us who do not. To keep the federal budget balanced, Congress has only three choices," Istook said. "We could raid Social Security's trust fund, which has been done for decades, but that's wrong, and it's time to stop that. We could raise taxes, as President Clinton proposes, but that would also be wrong. Or we can reduce the size of government by 1%. To me and to most Americans, this is the right answer. It's really a no-brainer."

"I was appalled today to hear Democrats propose to spend more rather than less. There's no way, unless they raid Social Security's trust fund. And we won't let them."

"Our families find a way to tighten their belts when they must; it's time for Uncle Sam to do the same thing, and live within his means. If federal agencies can't trim by 1%, then we've got the wrong people running those agencies, and we need new ones. There's not a single federal program that can't spare a penny out of every dollar."

President Clinton has threatened to veto the bill. Istook says that instead he should help the Republican effort to trim fat out of the government: **"A balanced budget, without raiding Social Security, is the new standard in Washington, and it's long overdue. It's time to stop spending Social Security money on other things. Cutting spending by just this little bit starts lowering the national debt, for the sake of our kids. It protects Social Security Trust Fund, for the sake of our seniors. And it reduces the size of government, for the sake of all of us."**